#214: MAY 2016

THE INDYPENDE

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE



YOU DECIDE!

THE INDYPENDENT, INC.

388 Atlantic Avenue, 2nd Floor Brooklyn, NY 11217 212-904-1282 www.indypendent.org Twitter: @TheIndypendent facebook.com/TheIndypendent

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Ellen Davidson, Anna Gold, Alina Mogilyanskaya, Ann Schneider, John Tarleton

EDITOR:

John Tarleton

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Ellen Davidson, Alina Mogilyanskaya, Nicholas Powers

ILLUSTRATION DIRECTOR:

Frank Reynoso

DESIGN DIRECTOR:

Mikael Tarkela

DESIGNERS:

Steven Arnerich, Anna Gold

CALENDAR EDITOR:

Seamus Creighton

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER:

Elia Gran

GENERAL INQUIRIES:

contact@indypendent.org

SUBMISSIONS AND NEWS TIPS:

contact@indypendent.org

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION:

contact@indypendent.org

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS: Sam

Alcoff, Linda Martín Alcoff, Bennett Baumer, Devika Bilimoria, Duane Bruton, José Carmona, Hye Jin Chung, Annette Elizabeth, Renée Feltz, Ersellia Ferron, Daniel Fishel, Lynne Foster, Michael Grant, Michael Hirsch, David Hollenbach, Dondi J, Margarita Kruchinskaya, Rob LaQuinta, Beatrix Lockwood, Gary Martin, Erik McGregor, David Meadow, Mike Newton, Jackie O'Brien, Maya Peraza-Baker, Robert Pluma, Anna Polonyi, Andy Pugh,
Conor Tomás Reed, Jim Secula,
Matt Shuham, Andrew Stern, Lisa
Taylor, Leanne Tory-Murphy, Cindy
Trinh, Solange Uwimana, Maria
Vassileva, Matthew Wasserman,
Beth Whitney, and Amy Wolf.

A BATTLE WORTH WAGING

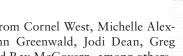
By John Tarleton

e felt the Bern, and then we acted on it. In the run-up to New York's April 19 presidential primary, The Indypendent set aside plans for its regular April issue to co-publish a special edition in tandem with The Occupied Wall Street Journal. The goal was to stage a massive independent media intervention on the home turf of Wall Street, the corporate media and the Democratic Party machine.

Known as The Battle of New York, this extra large, four-page broadsheet newspaper featured beautiful graphic design with con-

tributions from Cornel West, Michelle Alexander, Glenn Greenwald, Jodi Dean, Greg Grandin and Ray McGovern, among others.

This project was made possible by an outpouring of support. We received \$70,000 in crowd-funded donations courtesy of more than 1,600 backers in the United States and around the world. More than 1,000 volunteers helped distribute hundreds of thousands of copies in the New York City area as well as across upstate New York. While Bernie Sanders did not win in New York, this project gave us a glimpse of what people-powered media can achieve.











THE NEWSIES ARE BACK: And helping pass out papers in Brooklyn.

UPSTATE RUN: With help from Solidarity Movers, we made a two-day run across Upstate New York dropping off papers with local distributors.





IN THE SUBWAYS: A commuter takes a copy on the way into the Union Square station.

VOLUNTEER POWER: Ready to distribute freshly arrived papers.

IN SOLIDARITY: Striking Verizon workers from the Communications Workers of America District 1 with copies of The Battle of New York.

TOWARDS A REVOLUTION TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

Towering human rights attorney Michael Ratner died May 11 at the age of 72. A former president of the National Lawyers Guild and of the Center for Constitutional Rights, Ratner was perhaps best known for his efforts on behalf of prisoners being held indefinitely and tortured in the U.S. military prison in Guantánamo, Cuba, but his involvement with Guantánamo goes back to the 1990s, when hundreds HIV-positive Haitian refugees were held there in inhumane conditions.

Although he racked up many important legal victories, including the overturning of the NYPD's notorious stop-and-frisk policy and a Supreme Court ruling that terror suspects held in Guantánamo were entitled to habeas corpus rights under the U.S. constitution, he took on cases with little regard for their winnability, but rather on the basis of whether they would advance the cause of human rights and justice.

He viewed the legal arena as only one of many fronts in the pursuit of progressive radical change, and he took part in many demonstrations and other activist events. He and his wife journalist and filmmaker Karen Ranucci were also central to a vital community of progressives, and they are legendary for hosting an annual July Fourth barbecue and softball game, where legal, media and other activists battled it out on a baseball diamond.

As part of a "Shadow Cabinet" special issue of The Indypendent published at the onset of the second Obama administration, Ratner outlined his first steps if he were appointed attorney general. The article — "Toward a Revolutionary Transformation of Society" — is republished here.

— ELLEN DAVIDSON

By Michael Ratner

t will be a cold day in hell when a person with my politics is appointed attorney general of the United States. The attorney general is the head of the misnamed Department of Justice, better named the Department of Injustice. She (one woman has held the job since 1789) is the chief law enforcement officer of the United States and enforces or does not enforce federal criminal and civil laws including civil rights laws. Agencies such as the FBI (U.S. political police) and the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) come under its umbrella. Even within the context of a capitalist structure and a legal system that currently oppresses the majority of the population, the attorney general could turn this society on its head and take important steps toward a more equal, less oppressive and freer society.

What I have suggested below are arguably transitional steps that contain within them the potential for aiding a revolutionary transformation of society. I want to stress that none of these can be achieved without a massive mobilization of people in the streets. Ultimately, only with socialism will we live in a society where law will work for people and not be employed as a means to protect the ruling class.

Let's assume I take office on January 20, 2013, the same day Obama takes the oath of office for his second term.

What do I do on the first day? I could number a sheet of paper from one to 100 that would reflect many of the actions I would take. However, for today, let's start with the top 10. I would begin by not enforcing certain laws, which I have the right to do; then I would investigate and prosecute the real bad guys.

- 1. Handcuff the FBI not activists. Protect our right to dissent and protest by ending FBI surveillance, spying, wiretapping, racial and ethnic profiling, use of informants and entrapment of activists and others not engaging in criminal activity.
- 2. No criminal prosecutions of those involved in the sale or personal use of all drugs. Recom-

mend the immediate parole of all persons jailed for crimes relating to drugs.

3. Recommend parole for tens of thousands in federal prisons including those convicted as juveniles, political prisoners such as Native American activist Leonard Peltier and those serving more than 20 years. Those remaining

should be treated humanely (no solitary), and given educational programs. Ultimately, prisons must be abolished. "When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out." — Ho Chi Minh

- 4. No prosecution of the undocumented. No more criminal enforcement of immigration laws including Operation Streamline, which has resulted in criminal prosecution and jail sentences for scores of thousands of immigrants
- 5. End the prosecution of truth tellers and internet activists. Bradley Manning, Jeremy Hammond, Julian Assange, Barrett Brown, the late Aaron Swartz and untold others who seek to expose criminality and challenge corporate control of information which should be free to all.
- 6. Don't enforce the tax laws against those forced to carry the burden for the rich. The attorney general cannot change the tax code, but can refuse enforcement of its unequal burden. No criminal prosecution or civil enforcement actions against people or families who earn under \$40,000 and who refuse to pay taxes. Tax the rich, not those with lower incomes.
- 7. Indict and prosecute Obama and administration officials for murder by targeted assassination. A federal judge recently said, in the context of the drone killing of Anwar Al-Awlaki, that the President could be subject to prosecution under a U.S. statute prohibiting "foreign murder of United States nationals."
- 8. Indict and prosecute the George W. Bush torture team. Bush, Dick Cheney, former CIA head George Tenet, scores of others and the lawyers such as Alberto Gonzales and John Yoo, who tried to justify the practice.
- 9. Too big to fail; too big not to be in jail. Bank

and financial institutional fraud was one of the main

Presente! Michael Ratner, 1943-2016

causes of the 2008 continuing crash. Yet, 2011 saw prosecutions of financial institutions fall by half from the decade before. Prosecuting bank and financial fraud is a necessity. Another crash is inevitable under our current capitalist system, but its severity can perhaps be limited by going after the big, bad banks.

10. Propose a law similar to that in Bolivia, Law of the Rights of Mother Earth (Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra). The law gives a legal personality to the human community and lifelecosystems. Even prior to trying to pass such a law I would ensure that all of the federal agencies under the Department of Justice protect Mother Earth and her life systems. I would attempt to enforce those rights in court by seeking to protect indigenous communities and their culture and the right to clean water and air and to live free from contamination.

While the above actions are possible under our current capitalist system, as I said, they are unlikely without a mass movement making militant demands.

I want to conclude with a paragraph by my friend Michael Smith, who is co-editing a forthcoming book entitled Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA:

"Law in America is sold as an impartial force for justice and equality. The frauds of formal equality of rights and the apparent neutrality of judges was brilliantly pierced by Anatole France's oft-quoted remark that the law in all its majesty forbids all persons, whether rich or poor, from sleeping under bridges. With socialism in America, the people will own the bridges, and they'll sleep peacefully and contentedly with a roof over their heads knowing full well that they have created a society where the law won't work against them and in the words of that great manifesto 'where the full development of each is the condition of the full development of all'"

This article originally appeared in the January 21, 2013 issue of The Indypendent.

CHERYLBIREN

By Steven Wishnia

his is not just a strike against Verizon," Communications Workers of America (CWA) President Chris Shelton told the more than 1,500 people who packed the block outside a Verizon Wireless store on Wall Street May 5. "This is a strike because this country's lords and corporations have decided they want to get rid of unions. It's about every person with a union card. It's about every person who works for a living."

The strike began April 13, when 39,000 workers from Massachusetts to Virginia walked out, virtually all of them in Verizon's landline division. It came eight months after the company's contracts with the CWA and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the two unions representing those workers, expired

"The issue really isn't the money," CWA official Bob Master told LaborPress in April. Verizon has offered workers raises averaging 2.5 percent a year for three years. But the company's April 28 "last, best, and final" contract offer would increase workers' health-care payments by about 20 percent, end family leave for new hires, and cut off pension accruals for workers who spend more than 30 years on the job. Most important, it says it will only guarantee job security if the unions accept "workforce flexibility changes." Those changes include increased ability to hire outside contractors for tasks like maintaining and repairing telephone poles and cable, to ship call-center work to low-wage lands like India and the Philippines and to transfer workers so they have to commute as much as 80 miles each way.

Verizon workers and union officials see this strike as a crucial moment for American organized labor. This is not a case of a beleaguered industry asking for concessions to avert massive layoffs, like the Big Three auto companies at the beginning of the recession, or more recently, the steel industry swamped by cut-rate Chinese competition. This is a highly profitable company—it made \$18 billion in profits last year, and paid \$13 billion to shareholders—trying to smack its unions down.

"This is one of the last big fights. We have to stay strong," Al Medina, a 43-year-old power technician from Brooklyn, said at the May 5 rally. "You know how unions are these days. A lot of people are looking at us to see what we do."

So what are the Verizon unions doing to win beyond the traditional strategy of "one day longer, one day stronger"? Verizon says its landline division brings in 29 percent of the company's revenue, but only 7 percent of its profits. Its wireless division is much more profitable and virtually all nonunion. Provoking a strike in the landline division might be a logical strategy. If the company wins, it gets major concessions that will erode the union. If it suffers a prolonged strike, the business it will lose will be from an area it doesn't care about. Verizon has long neglected its copper-line service, and in 2014, it failed to make the deadline for installing the cables to make FiOS fiberoptic service available to every household in New York City.

However, Verizon can't just abandon its landline business, responds Master. It is legally regulated as a phone company, and thus under a binding obligation to provide phone service as a "carrier of last resort." It also may not want to, he says. FiOS provides top-speed Internet service, and the day before the strike began, Verizon announced plans to start building a FiOS network in Boston.

The unions are relying on appealing

to the general public, support from other unions and the determination of members. In April, three New York City hotels kicked out strikebreakers after Hotel Trades Council members wouldn't cross picket lines outside. (On May 9, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order barring that picketing, after Verizon complained to the National Labor Relations Board that it was an illegal "secondary boycott" of a neutral party.) UPS drivers won't cross picket lines to deliver to Verizon facilities, CWA head Shelton told the May 5 rally, and their union, the Teamsters, is giving strike pay to truckers laid off for refusing to cross a picket line.

They are also urging the public to boycott Verizon — "Don't shop at Verizon Wireless, don't get FiOS, nothing," CWA Local 1101 President Keith Purce declared May 5—and launched picketing of Verizon Wireless stores around the nation. (Although fewer than 200 wireless technicians and retail workers are union, their existence means strikers can picket those stores

without being accused of a secondary boycott.) New York's building-trades unions are coordinating picketing at stores for continuous coverage, said an organizer.

"I think Verizon is seriously underestimating both our membership and the general public's mood," says CWA District 1 research economist Pete Sikora. He believes the public is supporting the strike because it "understands that there's a crisis in America," with the rich getting richer and the decline in middle-class jobs.

Outside the Verizon call center in Brooklyn, the picket line on a rainy day three weeks into the strike is much quieter than it was April 13, when more than 400 people loudly cheered presidential candidate Bernie Sanders as he proclaimed, "You're telling corporate America that workers in this country are not going to continue to be pushed down and down and down." The about 100 picketers occasionally blow whistles and airhorns, but most are hanging out and talking, many sitting in camp chairs.

That doesn't mean they're in a mood to give up. "I don't like the way they paint us as just hungry

THROWING DOWN: For striking Verizon workers

who have been on the picket line for more than a mon-

OUT OF SERVICE

Verizon claims that the strike hasn't affected its phone service. That hasn't been my experience.

I came home after covering the opening day of the strike April 13, picked up the phone to call my editor, and couldn't get a dial tone. I called the company and attempted to order repairs online several times. As a freelance journalist, I need my phone for work. Three times, I waited around my apartment all day for repair people who didn't show up for their appointment. When they showed up on other days, they not only failed to fix my phone service, they somehow got calls to my number rerouted to a restaurant in my neighborhood.

My bill did arrive on time—dated April 13. Instead of enclosing a check, I enclosed a letter.

"I do not expect that my service will be restored until the strike is settled and Verizon's legitimate professional and competent union technicians are back on the job," it said. "You should not expect any payment from me as long as you fail to provide any phone service."

— STEVEN WISHNIA

VERIZON STRIKERS SPEAK



WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT ABOUT BEING ON STRIKE?

"Respecting seniority and keeping jobs here. My kids — where are they going to work? You want to know there's going to be good jobs in the city for your kids."

WHAT'S HARDEST ABOUT BEING ON STRIKE?

"Not knowing what's going to happen."

Administrative Assistant, Brooklyn WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT ABOUT BEING ON STRIKE?

SHARLOMA COPPAGE, 41

"The family unit. With Verizon wanting to be 'flexible' about sending the workforce 100 miles out, they forget a lot of us are taking care of our parents, are single fathers, single mothers. They're destroying the family unit."

WHAT'S HARDEST ABOUT BEING ON STRIKE?

"I miss working. I love my job. I love interacting with the customers. I love troubleshooting. I love finding solutions."



WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT ABOUT BEING ON STRIKE?

"The company is disrespectful to us as a workforce."

WHAT'S HARDEST ABOUT BEING ON STRIKE?

"Not having a paycheck."

grant from Brooklyn. He remembers working 12 hours a day to restore phone service in Lower Manhattan after the 9/11 attacks. In 2011, he says, Verizon workers wound up making concessions on health care when they ended their strike after 15 days, just before Hurricane Irene hit. "That's why we're so hard about it now," he says, calling the company's demands that workers pay more "a bayonet under the ribs."

Jené Harrison, 41, a facilities specialist from Queens, feels that Verizon was particularly disrespectful when it sent the April 28 contract offer directly to workers instead of going through the union, and spent \$25 each to ship them overnight. "If you can spend a half-million dollars on FedEx packages," she says, "you can give us a decent contract."

CUNY IN CRISIS

CUNY PROFS APPROVE STRIKE VOTE

Members of the City University of New York's faculty union have overwhelmingly approved a strike authorization vote. More than 10,000 members of the Professional Staff Congress cast ballots and 92 percent of them voted in favor of empowering the union's leadership to call a strike if it deemed it necessary.

"The union remains absolutely committed to achieving an acceptable contract through the negotiating process, but we are prepared to take action if there is no alternative," PSC President Barbara Bowen said May 12 when the vote totals were announced. Bowen added that the earliest a strike would take place is in the fall.

The PSC's 25,000 members have worked without a contract since 2010 and have not had a raise since 2009. During that same time, the cost of living in the city has gone up an average of 23 percent, according to the

Dozens of PSC members were arrested in November for blockading CUNY administration headquarters and again in March while conducting a "die-in" outside Gov. Andrew Cuomo's midtown office. Years of underfunding by Albany have prevented a contract settlement and raised concerns about deteriorating conditions for both faculty and students at the nation's largest urban university system.

Strikes by public sector unions are illegal under New York's Taylor Law and are rarely attempted, as striking workers and their union can be slapped with heavy fines and union officers can be jailed for leading such an action

But Bowen says that won't weaken the resolve of PSC members.

"We are prepared to fight to defend our working conditions and our students' learning conditions. Our own lives and the life-chances of our students are at stake."

— INDYPENDENT STAFF

35 years of celebrating music of peace and resistance!



MARCH 2T

A Toast to Those Who Are Gone: Matt Jones/Phil Ochs Tribute with Magpie

¥ SATURDAYS AT 8 P.M. ★



Community Church of New York Unitarian-Universalist 40 E. 35th St. (Madison/Park) New York, NY 10016

> doors open 7:30; wheelchair accessible 212-787-3903 www.peoplesvoicecafe.org

Suggested Donation: \$18, \$10 PVC subscribers More if you choose; less if you can't; no one turned away

Hope in the Dark

Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities

REBECCA SOLNIT WITH A NEW FOREWORD AND AFTERWORD A radical case for **HOPE** as a commitment TO ACT in a world

whose future remains uncertain and **UNKNOWABLE**.

haymarketbooks.org

"Time and again she comes running towards you with a bunch of hopes she has found and picked in the undergrowth of the times we are living in. And you remember that hope is not a guarantee for tomorrow but a detonator of energy for action today."

—JOHN BERGER

"Hope in the Dark changed my life. During a period of pervasive cynicism and political despair, the first edition of this book provided me with a model for activist engagement that I have held dear ever since . . . Despite all the obstacles, we must not lose sight of the fact profound transformation is possible."

—ASTRA TAYLOR

DEATH BY INDIFFERENCE

NYPD OFFICERS SHOW LITTLE INTEREST IN CPR TRAINING

By Nick Malinowski

hy nobody do no CPR?" — the question pierces a cell-phone video documenting New York Police Department officer Daniel Pantaleo choking Eric Garner to death. Garner lies handcuffed, facedown, on a Staten Island sidewalk as nearly a dozen officers, and eventually emergency medical services employees, stand around him. No one provides assistance. Nearly two years later, after another death at the hands of the NYPD, the trial of a different officer has provided some clarity.

Peter Liang, the rookie NYPD officer who shot 28-yearold Akai Gurley in a darkened East New York stairwell in November 2014, testified to a Brooklyn jury on February 10 that he had never really been trained in CPR at the Police Academy, despite receiving a certification for the skill. "There were two to three hundred people in the class. During our test they gave us the answers," he said. Liang's partner, Shaun Landau, also testified to this effect, acknowledging that his CPR training lasted about two minutes, that he was fed the answers and that every cadet received the certification.

After being shot, Gurley bled to death in the stairwell. Neither Liang nor Landau provided aid, arguing instead about who would call their supervisors. At some point, they stepped over Gurley's dying body in an effort to locate bullet fragments from the discharge. It was Gurley's companion, Pink Houses resident Melissa Butler, who called an ambulance and tried to keep him alive. Liang said in court that he would have helped, but didn't know

Both he and Landau have since been fired from the NYPD. Liang was convicted of manslaughter and misconduct and eventually sentenced by Judge Danny Chun to community service and probation, to the dismay of Gurley's family and their supporters who had sought jail time. Gurley was killed four days before a Ferguson, Mo., jury failed to bring charges against police officer Darren Wilson, who shot and killed Michael Brown in August 2014.

Liang's courtroom admission was heartbreaking for Michael and Carmen Ojeda of Brooklyn.

On Aug. 27, 2010, Carmen Ojeda was rushing their 11-year-old daughter Briana, who was suffering from an asthma attack, to the Long Island College Hospital in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. Having mistakenly turned her car down a one-way street against traffic, she was stopped by a police officer, Alfonso Mendez. She begged him for help, but he insisted, "I don't do CPR, I don't know how," according to court documents. Instead, Mendez began issuing Carmen Ojeda a traffic ticket and held her for 15 minutes while her daughter gasped for air in the back seat. By the time they reached the hospital, just three blocks

By the time they reached the hospital, just three blocks away from where Mendez stopped them, Briana was dead.

"My daughter won't have a sweet 16 party, she won't graduate from college. She told the officer, 'I can't breathe,' just like Eric Garner. They both needed CPR," Michael Ojeda told me. "Every day I wake up and look for her in her room, hoping it's a nightmare and that I'll wake up

and it's not real."

"It's a hole in your heart that just won't ever go away," Carmen Ojeda said.

Mendez went on the run after the incident, shaving his head to change his appearance and omitting the interaction on incident reports from the day. Detectives finally located him after they canvassed witnesses with photos of officers from neighboring precincts. He eventually faced departmental charges and was suspended, but was never criminally charged. Two years later he was working on modified duty in Bronx public housing.

The fact that Liang was convicted criminally of misconduct, at least in part for not rendering aid, but Mendez was not, doesn't sit well with Carmen Ojeda.

"I feel our case was just brushed aside," she said. "I believe that there was injustice done. I believe [Mendez] should go through his trial, but he should be indicted for his negligence. He should not be a police officer. My daughter died. She's not coming back. And now he's in another precinct? Does that make sense?"

OPENING THE DOOR TO CHANGE

For the last six years the Ojedas have been shuttling back and forth between their Brooklyn home and Albany, N.Y., lobbying to get legislation passed that would require officers to be retrained in CPR every two years. They've spent tens of thousands of dollars on the effort, in advertising and organizing bus trips with advocates to the capital. Every year the bill passes through the State Assembly, but hasn't gained traction in the generally more conservative State Senate, which is controlled by Republicans.

"The [Liang] thing has opened the door a little bit," Michael Ojeda said. The bill has also secured the support of Republican Sen. Jack M. Martins of Long Island, which Michael Ojeda and other elected officials pointed to as a hopeful sign.

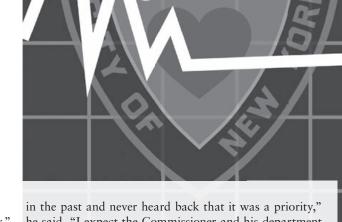
'We are encouraged to have a majority member in the Senate as a sponsor," said Kristin Williams, the legislative director for Assembly Assistant Speaker Felix Ortiz, who has championed the bill.

"Hopefully we'll get the law so that no other families have to go through this, and no officers have to go through this," Mr. Ojeda said. He said that police officers have also been supportive of the cause.

Nobody wants to go home and tell their kids that they let a child die because they didn't know how to do CPR,"

NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton, forced to respond to the allegations against the department's training lodged by Liang and Landau, has said he is thoroughly investigating the academy's CPR course. "Under no circumstances will we tolerate any instructor in the New York City Police Department short-circuiting the process for this instruction," Bratton said. He has since reassigned a police academy instructor.

State Assemblyman Ortiz has said that Bratton should have been on the issue long ago. "I've asked Commissioner Bill Bratton to mandate CPR retraining several times



he said. "I expect the Commissioner and his department finally realize that CPR saves lives and that there is absolutely no excuse not to properly train officers."

Michael Ojeda agrees that the scrutiny is long overdue. "For someone training police officers to just have the audacity to tell 200 cadets, don't worry about this part, we got you, he's got to be very comfortable with that. It's not the first time he's done this," Michael Ojeda said of the CPR instructor's decision to give the exam answers to Liang and his classmates. "We've got to look back and see how long this has been going on," he said.

POLICE BRASS 'TALKING OUT OF THEIR ASS'

But not everyone is on board with the bill. Former NYPD officer Eugene O'Donnell, for example, sees the legislation as misguided. "So they are going to be threatened and sanctioned into becoming caregivers, because someone in Albany decided that's best?" he asked. "I guess you can keep trying to slam the round peg into the square hole, but it's not going to happen on the ground."

Peter Zimroth, a federal monitor overseeing changes to the NYPD's stop-and-frisk program, has pointed to a similar disconnect at the police department. In a report published in February, he wrote that although the department has issued new guidelines for stops and initiated new trainings, many rank-and-file officers remain unaware that any changes were made. Other officers are intentionally ignoring the new rules out of fear of legal liabilities,

Recently, a Black NYPD officer interviewed by the New York Times also described conflicts between the public statements of police brass on quotas — that they do not exist — and the reality of her day-to-day work, in which she is forced to meet them. "It's like they're talking out of their ass and their mouth at the same time," she said.

DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN

Michael Ojeda sees Akai Gurley's death as a result of the NYPD not taking the issue of CPR seriously, and history predictably repeating itself. It's a feeling that other people who have lost family members to police violence share.

Nicholas Heyward Jr. grew up around the corner from the Ojedas' house. Michael Ojeda, whose father ran a deli in the neighborhood, said he remembers working with his dad and seeing little Nicholas coming in all the time for sandwiches. On September 27, 1994, Nicholas was playing cops and robbers in his building when he was shot in the stomach by police officer Brian George, who, like Liang, was conducting a vertical patrol with his gun out, finger on the trigger. George was never prosecuted, and Nicholas's father, Nicholas Heyward Sr., has organized yearly vigils and basketball tournaments to keep his son's memory alive. Gurley's death in such similar circum-

CONFRONTING THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

By Jesse Rubin

fter presiding over a chaotic Democratic presidential primary on April 19, the New York City Board of Elections released its certified election results on May 6 showing that it had rejected 91,000 provisional affidavit ballots, or about three out of every four cast on election day.

Diana Finch, who has served as a poll worker for nearly a decade, said the number of affidavit ballots in her Bronx election district far exceeded the usual number.

"The envelopes that are provided to each election district to put the affidavit ballots in were all filled to bursting at my poll site; we had to squeeze the affidavit ballots in," Finch told The Indypendent. "Clearly the Board of Elections never anticipated having so many affidavits."

There were a total of 121,056 affidavit ballots submitted, according to the Board of Elections. Finch explained that the 90,998 ballots excluded from the final tally have not been discarded, but have been set aside for possible further review.

The burden of proof, however, has now shifted from the Board of Elections to voters.

According to Jonathan Clarke, a lawyer with voter advocacy group Election Justice USA, the voters behind those 91,000 affidavits must request the status of their ballot in person at the BOE's office and contest it in court if they feel it was wrongly set aside.

People whose votes were excluded must act quickly to contest their affidavit status by the May 25 deadline, given the BOE's recent certification.

DISENFRANCHISED

At the BOE's two public hearings following the primary, hundreds of voters catalogued instances of alleged disenfranchisement — including polling places that didn't open on time, a lack of interpreters and, most prominent, widespread confusion about affidavit ballots.

Affidavit ballots are reserved for voters whose names don't appear on the voter rolls, but an unusually high number of affidavit ballots were cast, giving fuel to claims that voters were wrongly removed from the rolls.

At a raucous public hearing May 3, Angelica Thornhill, 30, of Crown Heights, told the board that she painstakingly took steps to ensure she was a registered Democrat, yet when she showed up to vote the rolls showed her registration as unaffiliated.

"If that's your mistake, my vote should be counted," she pleaded with the commissioners.

'ADVANCING A NARRATIVE'

But the board claims that most of the voters who believe themselves disenfranchised are actually just confused about the primary laws.

"More often than not, you're finding invalid affidavits in primaries because people are trying to vote parties that they're not registered," BOE Executive Director Michael Ryan told reporters.

Under New York State's closed primary laws, only registered Democrats and Republicans can vote in party primaries.

It is unclear how many of the 121,056 affidavit voters were wrongly removed from the rolls—but the BOE has suspended two senior of-

ficials without pay pending investigation into their roles in an improper purge of 126,000 Brooklyn Democrats from the voter rolls.

PRIMARY MESS:

Jay Wishner, a longtime

Manhattan poll worker,

tells the NYC Board of

Elections this "was the

election from hell."

Ryan blames the mistaken purge on a New York City Department of Investigation report published at the end of 2013 that criticized the BOE for "leaving too many people on the rolls"

"The Brooklyn office identified voters who hadn't voted in a long time, and conducted a purge," Ryan said, adding that "the proper procedure wasn't followed."

Both State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer have launched separate investigations into the BOE's actions.

As for the contingent of concerned voters that lodged complaints to the board over the past two weeks, Ryan rejected their concerns, saying they were part of an organized group with a specific agenda.

"We were warned in advance that there were folks out there that don't like the New York primary system, and were going to advance a narrative," Ryan said. "And they were well in the process of advancing that narrative and trying to make their pitch for why the process should be open primary like other states and not a closed primary."

Manhattan resident and voting rights activist Nisi Jacobs disagreed.

Jacobs, a Bernie Sanders supporter, said the board's dismissive response to its critics "highlights the juvenile, contemptuous, unprofessional and abusive relationship that exists between the New York City Board of Elections and the residents of New York City."

"Instead of a customer service relationship" Jacobs added, "it is one built on power, disrespect, subjugation and alienation."

'A BYZANTINE AGENCY'

Whether the BOE will be forced to make any significant reform remains to be seen, as the board has a long history of obfuscating votes.

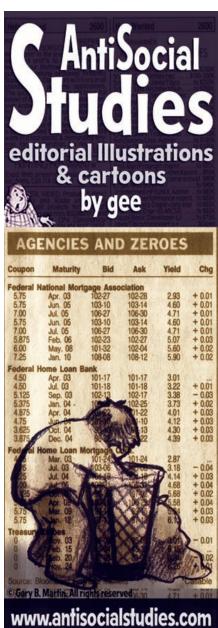
Sam Massol, executive director of the government transparency group Bridge Roots, told The Indypendent, "This is a long-term, systemic problem in an institution that has zero accountability."

Although the board's handling of the April primary is currently receiving a lot of attention, Massol noted that the extra scrutiny is driven by the ability of white progressives to garner media attention for the abuses they experienced.

In New York City's 2013 mayoral primary at least 1,000

Continued on page 15





Because the revolution

WILL be drawn!

MY THIRD-DEGREE BERN

HOPE IN A TIME OF CRISIS

By Nicholas Powers

drew a heart next to Bernie Sanders. I almost wrote, "All Power to the Soviets" or "Bern Baby Bern" but didn't and just danced in the voting booth. I smiled, kissed my ballot and

While leaving, a poll worker stared at me, "Having a good time in there?" I ducked her eyes, but outside, raised my hands as if touching clouds and wondered, what if he wins? What if this elderly man, who looks like a crazy hair pencil, who collects the agony of the poor and yells it at the media, what if he wins?

I did a silly two-step and just felt it. This hope. Felt how rare it was. Felt how it flowed from a clenched place under my navel. A year ago, I barely spoke about the campaign and now I was drawing hearts on ballots. Foolish? Yes, but millions had let that feeling free and it moved the mountain of No, inside us. No from the liberals saying we can't win. No from the conservatives saying we were communists. No from Marxists saying elections are a trap. No. No. No.

Now we had a self-described socialist within spitting distance of the American presidency. The world was watching, because when you peeled off the ideology, what was left was a simple thing. We wanted to love our neighbors. We wanted everyone to have enough because we're tired of hurting each other to get it.

Strangers wearing Bernie stickers walked by me. We waved at each other. And then one of them thrust his arms in the air and shouted, "BERNIE!" I pumped my fists and shouted back, "BERNIE!" We kept yelling and raising arms, just random strangers, reaching above ourselves for something higher, something better.

CYNICISM 101

"He's an idiot."

"Why?" I flinched on the phone.

"You see his Facebook post?" my friend Eric chortled, "He's all in for the Sanders campaign." I bit my tongue, not wanting to debate someone who can make an airtight argument even when he is

But it was strange, I thought, why would Yotam do that? He was a well-known New York organizer, the kind who kept his chin up when being arrested. He was so eerily handsome that he looked like a movie star in handcuffs. He's ballsy too. Half the fun of protesting was seeing him stare at cops with so much contempt you'd think their guns would melt.

"No theory," my friend said, "He's got no theory. He can't see Sanders is a sheepdog, his role is to get the Left excited then have them fall in line to the Democrats for the election. Jesse did it in '84 and '88. Dean did it in 2004. Same bait-and-switch. Same hustle."

Months ago, I remembered a news clip of Sanders telling a few reporters he was running for president. He announced it on his lunch break then hurried back to Congress for a vote.

I forgot about the senator. I forgot about a lot of things when Black Lives Matter ebbed from the streets. I forgot how to see other faces as mirrors of my own. And how the weight pressing on me was also what caused my neighbors to drink hard, fight hard, yell hard. It was the same one that made friends burst into tears as they talked of dreams being blown away like kites in a storm.

I was going numb too. I hid inside earphones and my cell phone. Got lost in the Internet's endless maze of glowing worlds. Inside this virtual life, I became like a Russian doll, shrinking into tinier versions of myself until I was a pile of empty shells, rolling out of my

virtual life, I became like sions of myself until I wa hands.

Once in a while I saw white, mostly young but a sounds good, I thought. I nomination. Nobody serie world is what it is. A heav "Hey you still there," h "Oh. Sorry," I stared a don't know where I am." Once in a while I saw Sanders on TV at a rally, where mostly white, mostly young but adoring crowds chanted his name. Sure, it sounds good, I thought. But who cares, he's never going to get the nomination. Nobody serious, nobody smart thought he would. The world is what it is. A heavy mountain of No.

"Hey you still there," he asked. The phone had been quiet.

"Oh. Sorry," I stared at the ceiling, "Am I here? I don't know. I

PILOT LIGHT

My phone buzzed, I got a text, opened it and saw a photo of a guy in a crowd, smiling as he held a banner that read, "Bronx is Berning." My man Ziggy sent it, so I walked outside, called him.

Yo, Nick," his voice was blurred by the roar of people cheering, "You still in California? When you coming back?"

"You at the Bernie rally," I shouted. He said he was, he said it was massive and that all this love electricity made his dreads tingle; he said fuck Hillary and that we can change the world. I was feeling

We talked about the accidents of history. The Republicans had imploded and Donald Goddamn Trump was going to be their nominee. America was looking left for a sane choice. And there was Hillary shuffling back and forth like a soccer goalie in front of the White House as Bernie kept weaving around her. It was funny. It was sad. But it was dangerous.

We talked about Bernie winning and Team Left stepping up. The ruling class would come down hard. They'd cut a deal with whomever they could. If Trump won because we couldn't get our shit together, Nightmare America would be very, very real. I was scared. But I was hopeful because the prize, if we won, was our lives.

We talked about what it could mean. Free health care. Free college. A jobs program, a New, New Deal. I told him how Mom struggled caring for me as a child, how Reagan gutted programs left and right and we fell through the shredded safety net. Sometimes, I saw her crying on the couch, sifting through bills on the table as if they were strange, unreadable Tarot cards. I told him how scared I was of poverty. Even now, on my street, I saw folks begging on corners or who died before hitting 50 years old, wheeled out on stretchers. I just wanted all this useless pain to stop.

"Amen, brother," he said. "Amen." He told me to get my ass back

to New York, and we hung up. When I tilted the screen, it reflected a tiny plane flying overhead that left chalk lines of smoke across the sky. Tilting it again, I saw again the man holding the banner for Bernie. I toggled it back and forth. Man. Plane. Bernie. Clouds. Man. Plane. Bernie. Clouds.

WINDOW SEAT

At 36,000 feet in the air, America was a patchwork quilt of land. Forehead on window, I stared at my nation, my home and wanted to feel "the Bern" but we've been here before. Hope and change. That whole thing.

Far below me, Democrats and Republicans were crisscrossing the states, waging internal battles for their base while

fighting each other for the undecided voter. I imagined the red state, blue state political map over the earth. Here lived the voters they wooed. Some were loyal to a vision, many were undecided, many just fucking ignorant. Half didn't even vote. Which pissed me off. But a lot of non-voters were, I knew, poor, they worked too many hours to go vote or if they were free, couldn't find transport. They move a lot and couldn't register on time or afford ID. They can't wait in line for hours. They are exhausted by the lies.

Night came and swallowed the land. Cities looked like tiny glittery anthills in space. All the light we create, I thought, with our media, our stories. And yet most people live in the darkness outside.

UNITE THE HOOD

I was a near the podium Bernie Sanders would use to address the growing crowd. It was the Prospect Park rally and I came to see his



WHEN YOU PEELED OFF THE IDEOLOGY, WHAT WE WANTED **WAS FOR EVERYONE** TO HAVE ENOUGH **BECAUSE WE'RE TIRED** OF HURTING EACH OTHER TO GET IT.



face in real time, pick up all the subliminal bodily cues obscured by cameras and microphones. He will sweat right in front of me. Maybe even spit. It could be a baptism.

Friends called me over, we talked, caught in the rising joy. People held signs, wore "Bernie 2016" t-shirts. Smiles multiplied with every hug. We stood under the bright sun, laughing at the smell of marijuana, at how stupid Trump was, how wild it is that a socialist got this close and again how stupid Trump was. But I felt it was time to leave, even if I missed Sanders, I had to

I took the 3 train, got off at the Van Siclen stop and walked around the projects aimlessly, blindly, compulsively. Not knowing why. Maybe thinking how New York has very low voter turnout and the poorest areas like this one, filled with the most people, are barely seen on election day. Maybe it's (was) because from 36,000 feet in the sky most of America looks like it lives in darkness.

I replayed the memory of the mostly white crowd at the rally and imagined them cheering Bernie in this public housing plaza. And laughed. Wow. That'd grab attention. But to do that ELECTION DAY they'd have to leave their roles in the invisible story they told themselves about race and class. One that goes, I'd be robbed, raped or killed. Or I'd be wasting my time because they're too fucked up, too poor to vote. They'd have to leave that story and create a new one with the people here.

A young man passed by me, rapping to himself. I remembered a documentary on the rise of Hip Hop in 1970s New York. Just as bad then as it is now. Gangs cut neighborhoods apart. If you crossed the line, you'd splash in your own blood. But those young men, under pressure from the cascading grief pouring from every face they knew, held a gathering and signed a treaty. In the early fragile peace, Afrika Bambaataa and DI Kool Herc plugged sound systems into city streetlights and blasted the pain from people's bodies with giant speakers booming planet-sized beats.

How we needed that now. I stared at the projects and imagined all of us together, the white people from the Bernie rally dancing alongside everyone from the Hip Hop documentary but those

'70s Black and Latino New Yorkers were old and dancing with their adult children who now had kids of their own. Some of whom were trapped in these same buildings today.

It was fun to think. All of us rewriting with our limbs, a new story for us to live. And driving the music was fucking Bernie, one hand on his headphones as he leaned over his DJ laptop, toggling knobs, yelling as his white hair flew, "I'm about to drop a YUGE BEAT!"

Since it was an impossible act of imagination, I let myself see my mom, young and wide-eyed, dancing as she threw all those unpaid bills in the air. God, we could have used Bernie in the '80s.

Then I laughed and came back to reality. Dream on, nigga, dream on. I went home and, the next morning, saw a report of Sanders visiting the projects in Brownsville, Brooklyn. "It is absurd," he said in his earnest raspy voice, "that 35 percent of African-American children are living in poverty."

He's so sweet. It's like he heard me yesterday. I kept saying where's your DJ equipment, Bernie, where is it?

"You voted for Hillary, right?" the older Black woman teased the hipsters walking down the street. One turned around. "I'm with her," he beamed as they cheered. Gritting my teeth, I called my friend Lady Dragonfly.

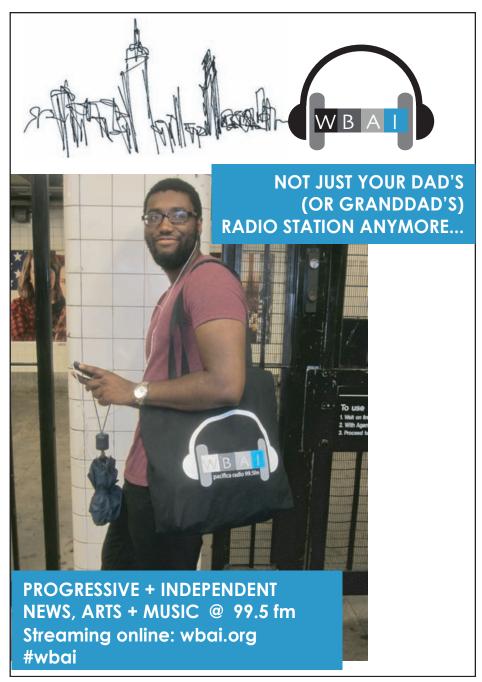
'What's up."

"Yo the craziest reverse racial condescending just happened. An older sistah, grandma level, just hollered love at white hipsters," I was nearly panting from walking fast, "For — get this voting for Hillary!"

"What," her voice nearly broke, "Oh checkmate. They must be so happy. They got a seal of approval. Whatever. Just cause she's an elder don't make her right."

"I know," my free hand was pulling at my hair, "They act like she's fucking Maya Angelou. What the hell does she know? Really? Did she do the research before going for Hillary? Grandmothers don't even know who got molested in their families, how am I supposed to

Continued on page 12





THEY LIT THE BERN

WHAT COMES NEXT?

WINNIE WONG TOHN TARLETON: It's been a long primary battle be-

WINNIE WONG: There has been an ongoing conversation among National Nurses United, People for sive and will open up more Bernie, Democratic Socialists of America and a num- space for more people of ber of other groups about doing something between Convention in Philadelphia to ensure that the particithe root problem. pation in this moment would not dissipate and that we could figure out what to do next en route to a contested convention, which we're certain will happen.

tween Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton that has

What would you like to see happen?

a People's Summit at this point?

I would like to see a progressive platform supported by elected officials who will be attending the conference, as well as soon-to-be electeds who are running for office and progressive political organizations that will be attending as well. It's going to be a big space always pretty but what emerged out of that experi- or large, to dinner tables across America every night with people from many different backgrounds and po- ence was a deeper understanding of the influence of now for a year. No one has ever done that before. Still, litical allegiances coming together to agree on a new money and power over not just politics, but over ev- he is a tactic. He's a means to an end. I think he's

"BERNIE SANDERS IS A TACTIC. HE'S A MEANS TO AN END."

progressivism for America.

The Left is prone to splintering in many different directions. How do you avoid that, if it's even possible,

I think over the last year the Left has become less cynical. It's going to be the job of the facilitators to

cies of the Sanders campaign?

It won't be the legacy of the Sanders campaign because the Sanders campaign doesn't get to call the shots. It will be a decentralized movement. There's think the Sanders campaign was like, "Holy fuck!" no way we can achieve political change in this coun- and then had no choice, in some ways, but to follow try unless people from social movements commit to our lead. tackling electoral power effectively and strategically. The recent ousting from office of district attorneys in Unleashing the #FeelTheBern hashtag was another Chicago and Cleveland were both electoral battles led powerful intervention. by organizations that emerged out of the Black Lives Matter movement.

tain of their power, they will be unstoppable. You will see it not just from movements led by people of color, but also the women's movement, the LGBTQ J upended many people's expectations. Why convene movement, the environmental justice movement.

Hopefully these movements will be more inclu-

color to participate and the big picture will emerge forms on the Internet. The establishment media inthe California primary and the Democratic National that all our issues are connected and that capitalism is corporated the hashtag into their feeds and after that,

They both were active in Occupy Wall Street. In 2013 they

contest in which Hillary Clinton was expected to stroll to an

easy coronation

We encouraged people, pressured them even, to use

the hashtag and this gave us an inkling of what a dis-

tributed strategy might look like. We always knew it

was going to work, we just didn't think it was going

I am not a Democrat. I'm not a Bernie or bust per-

son. Bernie Sanders has brought the S-word, small

munity power that will put us on our way to a better

I don't think that things are ever really going to be

ing sea levels, shocking forest and brush fires, ocean

We're not doing enough, so we have to do some-

We can create a transitional world and in that time,

our culture and people can adapt to these new very

challenging realities. At the core of it is a redistribu-

tion of wealth so we can have transformational chang-

es like a guaranteed basic income and Medicare for

climate crisis that is continuing to unfold.

Yet this isn't really about Bernie in the end, is it?

there was really no looking back.

to work this well!

A tactic to what end?

From your vantage point, what role did Occupy Wall Street play in setting us on the course we are on now?

The arc of the past five years has been remarkable. I believe it started with Occupy. It was there that single-issue activism became multi-issue activism. For the first time in many years, decades, you had housing activists working alongside trans activists, working alongside environmental justice fracktivists. It wasn't

> eryday life, the 99 and the 1 percent. The Sand- aware that he is a tactic. ers campaign electrified the world by electoralizing those concerns.

You are an anarchist, yet at the same time you To help us move toward building people power, comare comfortable working in the electoral realm.

Anarchy is a way of life based on the broad principles of cooperation, solidarity, resilience rosy again. We're well past that. Just look at the risbuilding, decentralized coordinated activity. We are applying that operating system to this cam-acidification and all the other signs of an accelerating

Creating 200 different pro-Sanders Facebook pages thing. Electing Bernie Sanders and building local poliafter the unifying force of a campaign is no longer and then handing control of them to his supporters. tics is something. That's the opposite of what would have occurred in a normal top-down political campaign.

I knew that decentralizing would change everything, make sure we are creating a space where participants and that's exactly what we did. We sensed there was are able to be productive rather than cynical and re- a broader public that was ready for a Sanders mes- all. If we don't create conditions that are more just saging campaign, but it was also very clear to me that and palatable to human existence over the next 20 their participation in the electoral process would be years, then our day-to-day existence will dissolve into Will more people running for office be one of the lega- dependent on whether they were able to create the violence and strife, and it's messaging themselves. Social media has been both an not going to be pretty. organic ally, and a game-changing tactic.

I gave the passwords to everybody. It was dangerous but effective. It worked. It changed everything. I

It carried the movement narrative co-created by hun-Once social movements start to become more cer- dreds of thousands of people across multiple plat-

Winnie Wong calls herself a practical anarchist. She speaks the Wall Street-bashing senator from Massachusetts who lowers and more user traffic in some weeks than the official in short intense bursts, an activist warrior slashing her way ultimately declined to run for the White House, When Bernie toward a future that somehow has to be won. Charles Lench- Sanders jumped in the race a year ago, the anarchist and ner identifies as a "full-spectrum socialist" who will adopt the socialist shifted gears and used their online organizing As the Democratic primaries wind down, Wong and Lenchthe best strategy in a given moment to build the power of the skills to help build a nationwide grassroots infrastructure to ner are at it again, helping to organize The People's Summit working class. A former director of communications for the support Sanders' nascent campaign. Their efforts included Working Families Party, his preferred voice is one of bemused creating 200 pro-Sanders Facebook pages and giving away irony that masks an underlying seriousness of purpose. the passwords to his supporters, much to the surprise of backed his campaign, will seek to consolidate for the energies Sanders campaign staffers.

began collaborating on bringing OWS's battle cry of the "I knew that decentralizing would change everything, and networked movement, Wong and Lenchner did see the poten-99% vs. the 1% into this year's Democratic presidential that's exactly what we did," Wong recalls. "It was dangerous tial of the Sanders campaign before almost anyone else. So I but effective."

The prolific duo also launched the now-ubiquitous #FeelThe- might evolve in the future. They launched Ready for Warren, an online initiative that Bern hashtag and started the People for Bernie Facebook stimulated a groundswell of interest in Elizabeth Warren, page that currently has over three quarters of a million fol-

Facebook pages of either the Sanders or Clinton campaigns.

in Chicago from June 17-19. This gathering of thousands of Bernie supporters, including many of the key groups that have stirred by Sanders' historic run for the long haul. While they scoff at being considered leaders of what has become a highly checked in with them recently to get their respective thoughts on the path traveled so far and how the Sanders movement

J many people's expectations. What do you hope the Peolonger present? ple's Summit can achieve?

CHARLES LENCHNER: Tons of groups have sprung up and worked together and accomplished a great deal. However, there hasn't been an opportunity for anyone except campaign staff to actually gather in a relaxed setting, get to know each other and decide collectively what the next steps map of the Left. The people that voted for him are now in a You recently wrote that one of your goals is to see the elimiare going to be.

Can individuals attend? Or is the conference intended for a select list of groups?

It's open to everyone who wants to network with people who support Bernie Sanders' political revolution and to depolitical efforts that are locally based. velop a sense of collective. This is an opportunity to figure stuff out not as you stroke your chin deciding what's best, How would things look in two or four or 10 years if but in a relationship with the social forces that you want to this happened? be aligned with.

What would you like to see happen?

My goal is to see as many of the groups that have emerged in the wake of the Bernie campaign survive and thrive as now control the largest cities in that country. possible. In order to do that, they might need training and resources and support. They need to stitch together a mindset that they deserve to exist and figure out how to actually accomplish that. Historically, most entities tend to fade before long in the wake of a presidential election. Finding active for years to come, pushing for progressive policies, is their principles and points of agreement and then say "Who

What would be the basis for that? Political campaigns have a singular focus on winning votes that eventually comes to

> line with what Bernie Sanders has been saying.

If you belonged to a group of 10 people who canvassed

what their participation in the fice who othgeneral election will look like erwise might and who they are going to sup- not have port? We could get a thousand done so and groups meeting and deciding will also at to offer is worth it to them. That would be an amazingly empowering process.

TOHN TARLETON: It's been a long primary battle between in many different directions. How do you avoid that, if it's our forces have the kind of power to actually overthrow the Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton that has upended even possible, after the unifying force of a campaign is no rule of the 1 percent and institute a real democracy. But I do

> A central problem for the U.S. Left is that we have many organizations, but it's often unclear who they represent. Contrast that to Europe where a party might only have a few that we have protections for transgender people, immigrants percentage points in parliament but they represent some- and others. one. What Bernie Sanders has done is create an electoral patchwork of electoral districts that are 70 percent for Bernie, 30 percent for Bernie or whatever. To fully digest this, we need to make sure that in all the areas that Bernie was strong, there's a legacy not only of voting but of organization, that people who came together through the Sanders campaign find a way to craft sustainable

I'm looking at the Spanish municipal elections of last spring, where you had grassroots coalitions come together, figure out what they believed in, what their platform was, and then recruit a candidate. They

Think about how different that is from the American system, where the process of figuring out whom the candidate will be is preceded by lots of jockeying among insiders and by the time you have a candidate, she or he is already compromised. So could we cre- (Laughs) In the old days of real, existing socialism, an apelectoral machine that isn't built around specific candidates. onto fairly easily.

The other thing to do is to figure out where you have So changing that means having a class of people who are corporate Democrats who endorsed Hillary and who are loyal to what the people downstairs want. That's the oppo-My advice would be de-center vulnerable because their constituents are overwhelmingly site of an apparatchik. We don't need people who are like, the candidate and focus on the pro-Bernie and then get ready for campaigns to unseat those movement, which is totally in people or push them to adopt more progressive policies.

> Do you have a sense of whether the Sanders campaign will inspire people who share his values to run for office?

your neighborhood, can we get
It's already happening. The Sanders campaign proved that you 10 people to meet and de-you can run against the party establishment and do pretty way down to the local level through patronage politics. So if cide what to do next and not darn good for yourself. Look at Debbie Medina in Williamslook to others for solutions or burg, Brooklyn. She's been a community organizer there for direction? Can we have a situ- 30 years and is now running as a democratic socialist against ation where the activists in a a longtime incumbent state senator. This wave of support particular city or state have a for democratic socialism is going to draw people into run-

democratic process to decide ning for of-CHARLES LENCHNER

whether what a candidate has the same time help surface massive support for these people.

Can the Democratic Party actually be transformed from

The Left is prone to splintering The United States is the heart of a global empire. I don't think think we have the chance to win many things by fighting for them, and those things will improve people's lives in many material ways, whether it's \$15-an-hour minimum wage, paid sick days, free public university tuition, making sure

> nation of the Democratic Party apparatchik class. Can you explain what you meant?

"ON THE LEFT WE HAVE MANY ORGANIZATIONS, **BUT IT'S OFTEN UNCLEAR WHO THEY** REPRESENT."

a way for this political cohort to survive and grow and be ate a situation where grassroots coalitions form, decide on paratchik was someone whose task was to figure out how to serve the needs of the Party and in turn he or she would wants to run under our banner?" In other words, create the be rewarded with promotions within the Party. It was the way compliance was enforced throughout society, because That's a task that potentially Bernie supporters would glom in every social pyramid there were apparatchiks figuring out how things ought to be done to serve the folks upstairs.

"Oh, can we demand this?" No, figure out what the people you serve want and do that instead and don't do it because it's a part of a career ladder.

The reason why corporate Democrats are so powerful is not because there are so many people taking graft from corporations. It's because there is a whole pyramid of power from on high at the Democratic National Committee all the you want to go after that, you have to have a broad vision of what it means to take away that career ladder.

SUMMER GATHERINGS

The People's Summit will be held in Chicago from June 17-19. Some travel scholarships are available. For more information, see thepeoplessummit.org.

Meanwhile, organizers in Philadelphia will host a People's Convention on July 23, two days before the Democratic National Convention kicks off in that same city. For more, see thepeoplesrevolution.org.

— INDYPENDENT STAFF

NYPD

Continued from page 6

stances, and that of Timothy Stansbury in 2004, have renewed his efforts to hold George criminally responsible.

"I feel in my heart, that if Brian George had been convicted, if he had been held accountable at all, that Akai Gurley would still be alive today," he said at a recent event outside

Kings County Criminal Court in Brooklyn.

Carmen Ojeda agrees that by letting Mendez off the hook, other families, such as Gurley's, have been made to suffer. None of the officers involved in Eric Garner's death have been arrested or charged criminally; meanwhile, Ramsey Orta and Taisha Allen, whose cell-phone videos of his death went viral, have both been arrested since. Their respective attorneys have categorized the arrests as retaliation for the videos.

Both Nicholas Heyward Sr. and the Ojedas have petitioned Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth Thompson to reopen criminal investigations against officers George and Mendez. Late last year, Thompson agreed to reinvestigate the Heyward case.

THIRD-DEGREE BERN

Continued from page 9

trust their political judgement?"

"Oh. My. God," she laughed, "You went there."

"Who's driving the ice-cream truck grandma," I said, half choking on giggles, "Who's driving it?"

CYNICISM 202

"He's an idiot."

"Oh, come on now," I pushed back, "Bernie Sanders is not an idiot." "If he really believes that political revolution shit he's peddling," my friend Chris said, "He's an idiot."

Again, I bit my tongue, he's older and I look up to him, even when he's wrong. Leaning back in the seat, I listened as he said Sanders had tapped into a hunger go beyond normal politics but all he was going to do was funnel it, right back into electoral politics. It was a farce.

"Hmm, that's an uncomfortable thought," I said, "You're saying Bernie is a more successful con man than Trump.

He laughed.

"All Trumps got is bigotry, nationalism and steaks," I mouthed the words numbly, "Bernie has the Revolution."

He laughed again.

"If Bernie won the election," he said, "Everything he promised would be left behind. When people get into positions of power, they magically transform into the institutions they opposed."

I sighed, "How does any of this change." The question was too big. It dropped inside me and pulled thoughts into a place I couldn't reach. This is it. This is all that will ever be. This world.

I looked out of the window, watched a Black man with plastic bags on his feet, holding a sign, begging for money on the side of the highway. And another man stood between lanes, holding his hands out as cars sped by.

This is all.

SIGNS

Planes flew like giant dark arrows shot across the sky. Evening had come and I was on the roof, pacing back and forth, cellphone next to my ear.

"There's this joke on the Left that if voting changed anything," Bill Fletcher, my long-time friend, said, "They'd make it illegal."

"I remember that."

"I never liked it," his voice sharpened, "If voting wasn't important, why suppress it? For many people it has been effectively abolished; felons, in practical terms, the poor and homeless."

His words reeled in a memory of Sanders being interviewed the day after he lost New York's primaries. He was chastened, sad eyed. When asked what happened, he said, simply, "Poor people don't vote."

I thought of my fantasy, revolutionary dance party in the Van Dyke Houses' public housing plaza. Nothing changed in the real world. Young men were killing and being killed. I could leave and come to my rooftop, call my friend and talk about poor people as if they were echoes.

"My mom was on welfare in the '80s," I said, "Not long but long enough to feel shame. If Bernie had been president maybe our family could have stayed together. So when I hear them say voting doesn't add up to much, I get heated. You gotta be coming from a serious place of privilege to say reforms that save lives don't matter. And reforms don't even get people what they need, you know, we survive without it but damn ... just vote, please."

"I think that's a good line," he assured me, maybe he sensed I was wrestling with myself because his tone was saying, yes, keep your heart turned toward others, keep open to all forms of struggle.

We said goodbye and I felt the heaviness of Bernie not winning the

Democratic nomination. But I was grateful to this man. He made socialism a clean word. He reconnected a fractured Left. He showed us a new, small donor model of challenging the establishment. He made us visible to each other.

A chill was blowing across the sky. I walked to the rooftop door when in the Louis Armstrong Houses, a light when on and I saw a blue sign in the window. Squinting hard, I saw it was a Bernie Sanders poster.

PUTTING THE SOUL IN SOCIALISM

"What if Trump wins," I asked the class.

"Someone will assassinate him," a voice shot out. Everyone broke into laughter, turned and saw one of the shyest students in the class, covering her mouth.

"Where did that come from," I asked but she waved me to let it go. Over the chuckling, I wagged a finger at her and mouthed "stop it".

"What's your ideology," I spread my arms, "You have to figure that out to navigate the world. On one hand, conservatism holds that inequality is good, whether because it is seen as natural or traditional." I swung my hands to the other side, "And liberalism holds that inequality is wrong and not justified by nature or tradition but enforced by the powerful who profit from it."

"That's why Bernie was in the projects," a student said from the back row, Kango hat slid sideways, "His whole rap is how inequality is wrong. I was feeling him. I was like check out this old white man strolling in the hood. One of the guys with him said he was the first, the only really, presidential candidate to visit Brownsville."

Questions flickered in their eyes so I called up the video. The screen lit up with him in the projects, squinting in the sun, breaking down point-by-point why poverty was absurd. Some of my students are on Section 8, some live in public housing, they nodded their heads to his words as if some inner tide was moving through them.

"Professor," a student said, "Can you click on the one where he talks about his spirituality?"

I did. The class leaned in, listened, sifting his words and tone to map out his truth, working class people do that a lot, use a kind of radar to search for sincerity. It's a survival mechanism when you grow up around desperation. I have it too.

"At some level, when you hurt, when your children hurt," Sanders raised his eyebrows and pointed to himself, "I hurt." He circled his hands. "When we say that child who is hungry is my child, I think we are more human. That's my religion. That's what I believe in."

I saw the light from the screen reflected on their eyes and glasses. I felt what they felt. The need to believe that someone hears us. That our needs can be answered. That we are not alone. And here was this man who said we were in this together. Needed that feeling. And I was scared of hope dying in the cold machinery of politics.

"Bernie! Bernie!" the chant came from the screen. The video had ended and went to a new one of a stadium filled with chanting people. "Bernie! Bernie!" a student from my class joined in and then another one, smiling. A wildness lit the room. Another joined in. "BERNIE! BERNIE!" Then another. And then another. And then I joined.

Nicholas Powers is a professor of African American literature at SUNY-Old Westbury. He is the author of The Ground Below Zero: 9/11 to Burning Man, New Orleans to Darfur, Haiti to Occupy Wall Street (UpSet Press).



IN THE STREETS:
Thousands of Bernie Sanders supporters march down
Broadway.

THE INDYPENDENT $Mav\ 2016$

SEE MORE OF MINI THANEVER BEFORE

No one tells the story of New York better than New Yorkers, and now the story just got bigger. Presenting MNN's HD Community Channel: We built this channel specifically for MNN Community Producers to tell their stories. Love stories, documentary stories, action stories, BIG stories. Join us at MNN HD on Time Warner Cable channel 1993 for the biggest New York stories there are - the story of your life.

AMPLIFIED

LOCALLYOICES

TIME WARNER CABLE CHANNEL 1993

HD

STREAMING WORLDWIDE ON MNN.ORG



By Peter Rugh

INGREDIENTS:

One high-pressure natural gas pipeline, 3.5 feet in diameter

Two 50-year-old nuclear reactors

PREPARATION:

Situate each ingredient beside the United States's largest metropolitan area. Combine.

The above recipe was provided courtesy of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Spectra Energy and Entergy Corp.

Spectra's Algonquin Incremental Market Project, also known by its acronym as the AIM pipeline, will pass about 1,200 feet from Entergy's 50-year-old Indian Point 3 nuclear reactor in Buchanan, N.Y., on the Hudson River approximately 45 miles from Times Square. FERC approved the pipeline last year after an NRC specialist claimed it would pose no risk to Indian Point's

The AIM pipeline, scheduled to be completed in November, will connect the existing Algonquin pipeline in northern New Jersey with Boston and ports in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. It will be able to carry 342,000 dekatherms of natural gas per day, roughly equivalent to 342 million cubic feet. Spectra paid Entergy a one-time licensing fee for the use of its property, which Entergy said was "in line with industry practice."

The AIM pipeline is among the natural-gas infrastructure projects that have been built recently or are under way along the East Coast. They are driven by the use of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, to extract natural

gas from the massive underground Marcellus Shale formation. New York State banned fracking in 2014 after years of protests about its environmental and health dangers, but it is still very much in use in other states above the Marcellus Shale, particularly Pennsylvania.

After their success banning fracking, environmentalists in New York have turned their attention to the new wave of gas pipelines and compressor stations. "We want New York State to be a stopping point, where they can't use our state as a conduit for gas," said Kim Fraczek, an organizer with Sane Energy Project. "Fracking is still going on in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. They want to compress, pipe and ship their gas throughout New York and New England. But if we stop these pipes, they won't have the ability to get their product to market."

Grassroots pressure exerted by Sane Energy and other New York environmental groups has continued to pay off. In April, the state Department of Environmental Conservation, after receiving approximately 15,000 written comments, mainly from pipeline opponents, rejected water permits for Williams Partners's Constitution Pipeline, which would have carried fracked gas into New York from Pennsylvania. The energy giant Kinder Morgan had planned to use the same right-of-way passage through New York for its Northeast Energy Direct pipeline, but scrapped the \$3.3 billion

project to pump gas from Pennsylvania to New England shortly after the Constitution pipeline was rejected. Last November, Gov. Andrew Cuomo nixed plans for an offshore liquefied natural gas export terminal about 18 miles south of Long Island. Long Island and New York's power authorities are currently weighing whether to build an offshore wind farm in the area.

"We're finding that these infrastructure battles, while localized, taken together are part of a larger movement toward more climate-friendly energy sources," said Patrick Robbins, also with Sane Energy. New gas infrastructure, he added, helps

> fracked gas "directly compete on the market with renewable sources." He points to coalitions such as Beyond Extreme Energy, which works to unite local communities opposing pipelines and to advocate renewable energy instead.

Proponents of natural gas insist it contributes less to climate change and produces less air pollution than coal and oil do. Other talking points for gas include its low price and widespread availability. Spectra Energy's website for the AIM pipeline combines these assertions into one tidy paragraph, promising to "provide the Northeast with a unique opportunity to secure a cost-effective, domestically produced source of energy to support its current demand, as well as its future growth, for clean-burning natural gas."

One problem with this statement is that the Northeast doesn't need more gas. That's according to a study released last November by Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey.

It found the region could meet its energy needs over the next 15 years without pipelines like AIM — either through energy conservation programs or by building new transmission lines to carry electricity generated by renewable sources. Expanded use of gas, the researchers said, would lead to a 200-kiloton increase in the region's greenhouse gas emissions.

Nevertheless, New York's energy planners expect the state to continue to rely on natural gas at least until 2030. "With its nearness to the Marcellus Shale basin, New York should participate in prices lower than those experienced from 2000 through 2010 and more similar to those of the last few years," the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority declared in its 2015 Energy Plan. It projected that gas prices for the residential sector will grow by less than 1 percent a year over the next decade. Ironically, the authority is headed by Richard Kaufman, a former Goldman Sachs executive who Cuomo tapped as his "energy czar" shortly after Hurricane Sandy to move the state toward cleaner sources of power.

New York uses more gas than any other state in the Northeast. Gas-fired plants produced 44 percent of the

AFTER THEIR SUCCESS BANNING FRACKING, **ENVIRONMENTALISTS** ARE SEEKING TO STOP A NEW WAVE OF GAS PIPELINES AND COMPRESSOR STATIONS.

state's energy last year, compared with 35 percent in 2009, when the gas boom had only just begun.

But in the long term, according to Robbins, the growth in gas infrastructure has little to do with meeting domestic demand, since increased drilling has led to a glut of cheap gas. It has more to do with using the Eastern Seaboard as a gateway to untapped markets abroad.

In reaction to the 1973-74 "energy crisis," Congress passed the 1975 Energy Policy and Conservation Act, which banned the export of both crude oil and natural gas. While the Commerce Department developed regulations prohibiting crude-oil exports, however, it never did so for gas. In fact, the House approved legislation to expedite the approval of liquefied natural gas export terminals in November, and a version of the bill is currently before the Senate. A host of new terminals has already begun cropping up, including Cove Point in Maryland, where Dominion Power plans to ship nearly a billion cubic feet a day. Environmental groups estimate the Cove Point facility will spawn some 3,000 new fracked wells in Pennsylvania.

THE PROBLEM WITH NATURAL GAS

While it is true that natural gas emits 50 percent less carbon dioxide than coal when burned, it is composed primarily of methane — a gas 70 times as potent than CO, for retaining heat in the atmosphere. Research suggests that if as little as 3 percent leaks during the drilling process, natural gas' climate impact is on par with coal's.

How much methane regularly leaks into the atmosphere is difficult to gauge precisely. Data compiled by the nonprofit Fractracker Alliance in August estimated there are 1.7 million active oil and gas wells in the United States, and gas drilling and the buildup of related infrastructure have spiked in recent years due to fracking technology.

A significant body of research suggests that large amounts of methane are being released as a result of fracking. A 2013 study led by scientists with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that 6.2 percent to 11.7 percent of gas extracted in Utah's Uintah Basin wound up in the atmosphere. In a 2014 study that drew on inspection reports from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, researchers at Cornell University determined that fracked wells in the Keystone State were leaking at a rate of 6 percent.

Tony Ingraffea, the lead author of the Cornell study, frequently avers that natural gas isn't a "bridge fuel" to the time when renewable energy becomes practical, as the drilling industry would have us believe, but "a gangplank to more warming and away from clean energy investments."

– PETER RUGH

"As gas companies scramble to recoup profits, they are looking for new places with secure demand," said Robbins. "Building gas generation while they wait for markets to recover is a great way for them to appear profitable in the meantime." Their longterm payoff, he added, will come when they can reach foreign markets where their gas will fetch a higher price.

The biggest long-term issue with natural gas, however, is that its current cheap price masks the future costs of global warming caused by the continued burning of fossil fuels. "Climate change represents the greatest threat to our homes and well-being in the coming century," Robbins warned. "Locking us into a fossil fuel-based energy system is a guaranteed way to raise those costs."

It also entails sacrifice on the part of those who live beside industrial well pads on what was once farmland, near power plants and compressor stations that thicken the air with smog and along the polluted path of

"Like a lot of people when you hear, 'They're going to put a natural gas pipeline right next to a nuclear power station, right next to your kids' school, and right next to your house,' you think, 'No way is the government going to let that happen," said Courtney Williams of Peekskill, New York, whose home sits beside the AIM pipeline's slated path. "But, yes, as preposterous as it sounds, that exactly is what's going on."

Williams, a Princeton-trained physicist and mother of two small children, has joined with her neighbors to rally against AIM. The Indian Point nuclear plant has already had a string of accidents, including a leak of radioactive tritium gas in January. Opponents warn that the pipeline, which will pass less than 120 feet from the plant's

backup electrical switches and diesel-fuel tanks, will compound the risk of an explosion. Since last fall, they have performed a string of civil disobedience actions halting construction of the pipeline. Meanwhile, an online petition calling on FERC to retract Spectra's permit has collected over 27,000 signatures.

Groups like Sane Energy and their allies hope they can build a movement big enough to pressure decision makers to move toward renewable energy and away from fossil fuels and the cataclysmic climate impacts they entail. The state Public Service Commission is expected to release details soon of its "Reforming Energy Vision" (REV) plan, which pledges to cut the state's greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent and to generate 50 percent of its energy from renewable sources

However, Cuomo and his energy czar,

Kaufman, appear to have taken a page from President Barack Obama's "all of the above" energy strategy. Gas remains a heavy fixture in the state's plans, even while significant investments in renewable energy are under way, including a \$900 million solar panel manufacturing plant in Buffalo. The governor might have had less than altruistic motives for promoting that project, though: His administration is under a Justice Department investigation for awarding the contract to build the plant to LPCiminelli, a top campaign contributor.

"A lot of what's in REV looks great on paper," said Kim Fraczek. "But none of it is going to move forward in a genuine fashion if we don't conduct the activism we need to

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Continued from page 7

South Bronx ballots were lost, Massol said, and it "didn't even make the news."

"This is a bigger problem than just the Sanders campaign getting disenfranchised," Massol added.

The Democratic and Republican party leaders in each of the five boroughs appoint the 10 commissioners who head the BOE. And it is the BOE's ties to deeply entrenched party machines that make it what Massol describes as "one of the last great patronage mills in the State of New York."

The same insular political culture that nurtures the BOE produced the laws that exclude non-party-affiliated voters from participating in primaries. So says Megan Ahearn, program director at the nonpartisan government watchdog New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). The six-month deadline New Yorkers have to change parties before a primary "was brought about because the BOE system is run by the parties," Ahearn told The Indypendent.

"In some elections, you don't even hear from the candidates that far in advance," Ahearn said. "How do you know what conversation [or] election you want to be a part of?"

ROCKING THE BOAT

"The state is not going to fix itself," Massol said. Instead, it will take a concerted effort from independent goodgovernment groups and outraged citizens to create the momentum for change.

NYPIRG's Megan Ahearn wants same-day registration, as well as a nonpartisan BOE to "help bring the politics out of decision making and be more accessible to

Some at the BOE's public hearings have called for a recount, others for the U.S. attorney general to intervene.

In April Mayor Bill De Blasio offered the BOE nearly \$20 million in exchange for "commonsense" reforms.

There is no shortage of ideas, but Massol warns that advocates for reform also "need to be realistic, not make promises or say things we can't deliver on." The veteran of good-government efforts continued, "There's not going to be a recount" in a contest that Clinton won by 58-42 percent with a statewide margin of 290,000

Separate investigations launched by State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and City Comptroller Scott Stringer may provide some insight into the BOE's missteps, but political calculations may water down any findings-Schneiderman's eye is on a future run for governor and Stringer is widely thought to be weighing a 2017 mayoral bid.

In the second public hearing after the primary, BOE executive director Ryan informed the public that if they don't like the law, "you have to petition your legislators to change it, and then we'll follow the new law."

But it is common knowledge that a majority of legislation fed to state Democrats by voter advocacy groups runs the high risk of becoming a so-called "one-house" bill—one that passes the Democrat-dominated State Assembly only to die in the Republican-controlled Senate with the behind-the-scenes blessing of Gov. Andrew

'The powers that be don't want this change,' Massol said.

"You have a lawnmower that's broken," the Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, resident added. "I know how to fix your lawnmower, I know what's wrong, but you don't want me to touch it, because you don't want to seem unable to fix it yourself."

5 WAYS TO MAKE NEW YORK VOTING EASIER

The NYC Board of Elections has earned its share of public outrage. However, it's important to remember that many of the problems we saw on April 19 stem from outdated laws that New York State legislators have so far refused to change. Here are five reforms that would make a difference.

• IMPLEMENT AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

California, Oregon, Vermont and West Virginia now automatically register eligible voters when they provide their personal information to a state agency while applying for a driver's license or government assistance or enrolling in a university, among other examples. More than two dozen other states including New York are considering legislation that would do the same.

• INSTITUTE EARLY VOTING

Early voting allows more people to vote who might otherwise be deterred by their personal schedules or concerns about long lines on election days. Thirty-four states have early voting. New York does not.

• CREATE A PRE-REGISTRATION SYSTEM FOR 16 AND 17-YEAR-**OLD VOTERS**

Millennials have already shaken up this election year with their overwhelming support for Bernie Sanders. Now imagine if we made it normal and easy for the young to register to vote well in advance of their 18th birthdays?

• END CLOSED PRIMARIES

Three million New Yorkers were ineligible to vote in the presidential primaries because they are not registered as a Democrat or a Republican. If you had wanted to change your party affiliation to vote in a primary you had to do so by Oct. 9, 2015, the earliest cutoff date of any state in the nation.

• IMPROVE THE CANDIDATE POOL

re going to overhaul
it easier and more
by out of politics. It's
it for third parties to
neir supporters for
candidates worth

— INDYPENDENT STAFF OK, this is changing the topic a bit. But if we're going to overhaul the rules around the voting process to make it easier and more inclusive, let's also work on getting big money out of politics. It's also time to jettison laws that make it difficult for third parties to grow and easy for the major parties to take their supporters for granted. Only then will we consistently have candidates worth voting for.

11

I design the Indy. I design for change. I can design for you.

STATES

CREATIVE DESIGN M.TARKELA@GMAIL.COM

CARGOCOLLECTIVE.COM/MTAR SPIRITOF.BANDCAMP.COM VIMEO.COM/TARKELA

ANOTHER **WORLD IS POSSIBLE**

Democracy Now! Twenty Years Covering the Movements Changing America By Amy Goodman with David GOODMAN AND DENIS MOYNIHAN SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2016

Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities By Rebecca Solnit Haymarket Books, 2016

By Beatrix Lockwood

ever are the corporate media more out of their element than when covering rising social movements.

The reasons for this are many. The corporate media generally don't pay much attention to the conditions that produce a movement like Occupy Wall Street or Black Lives Matter before they emerge in the streets. Most mainstream journalists have little or no familiarity with social movements or their participants. The chaotic, egalitarian nature of many movements, their seemingly "unrealistic" demands and their strident earnestness can be jarring for journalists who are more attuned to the conventional wisdom emitted from the corridors of establishment power. Yet, the same corporate media outlets that are always late to grasp these movements' importance are the first to pronounce their demise and write them off as misguided failures.

In such a milieu, we are fortunate to have independent, non-corporate journalists like Amy Goodman, who has been at the side of social movements for decades and can help us put some of their remarkable accomplishments in perspec-

Goodman's new book, Democracy Now!: Twenty Years Covering the Movements Changing America, written with her brother David Goodman and her longtime collaborator Denis Moynihan, revisits some of the stories that she and her team at Democracy *Now!* have covered since they launched their small, independent radio broadcast in 1996. Now, 20 years later, Democracy Now! is the largest public media collaboration in the country, broadcast on over 1,400 public and community

radio and television stations. It is funded solely through donations and grants. Goodman says the

show gives her the

freedom to "go where

the silence is." Since its founding, Democracy Now! has distinguished itself from other daily news broadcasts by its dedication to covering underreported stories and bringing out the voices of underrepresented groups. Never shying away from controversy, it has featured interviews with whistleblowers, refugees, antiwar protesters and death row

inmates.

In her new book, Goodman revisits some of the many grassroots movements that she and her team have covered. She has chapters on the antiwar movements that erupted in 2003, the efforts of whistleblowers to expose our growing surveillance state, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter and movements for LGBT equality, immigrant rights and environmental justice. Goodman challenges the conventional narrative that many of these movements failed, arguing instead that many of their efforts are simply still unfinished. She gives credit to grassroots organizers and celebrates the results of their hard work — sweeping and incremental, intended and unintended, near and far away.

Although Goodman's reflections on her time as the host of Democracy Now! will resonate most with longtime listeners and fans, this is a book for anyone interested in how social movements work. She relies on her interviews and broadcasts to form her narrative, but the story is less about the show than it is about the broader social movements that it has touched over the years. She begins her chapter on climate justice, for example, with a transcript of an interview she conducted in 2012 with Kumi Naidoo, the executive director of Greenpeace International. They spoke while he was hanging suspended from an oil rig in the Arctic Ocean to protest Gazprom, the first oil company to drill in the region. The interview

cially so when placed in the broader context of the climate justice movement. In the rest of the chapter, Goodman looks at other activists around the world who have fought against the corporations that have enriched themselves while destroying our planet. She tells the stories of the Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was executed after he helped expose Chevron's "drilling and killing" program in his home country, of the protesters who stopped the 1,200-mile-long Keystone oil pipeline and of the indigenous people who have won significant victories against corporations in Canada, the United States and around the world. At a time when coverage of climate change is often characterized by despair and cynicism, it is refreshing to be reminded of the victories activists have already achieved.

In this way, Democracy Now! has much in common with Rebecca Solnit's Hope in the Dark, which was reissued in March with a new foreword and afterword. The book was first published as an online essay in 2003, shortly after the Bush administration launched its "shock and awe" bombing campaign in Iraq. While pundits and journalists dismissed antiwar demonstrations like the global day of protest on February 15, 2003 — the largest single-day protest in history - Solnit looks at them alongside struggles such as the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Mexico and the 1999 protests at the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle. She rejects the impulse to dismiss movements as irrelevant when they fail to meet major goals. Instead, she highlights the power of incremental change and the small triumphs of grassroots organizing that often go unnoticed, even by the organizers

Though both Goodman and Solnit take on much of the same political and historical material, their approaches are quite different. Goodman, the resolute daily journalist, approaches the subject of social change head on, presenting what she uncovers. Solnit



Earthquake.

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

reports from Haiti after the 2010

(left) of Democracy Now!

Essayist Rebecca Solnit (right) finds signs of hope in unlikely places.

adopts the more reflective and poetic approach of the cultural critic, taking the time to wander among disparate ideas and events and connect them. It is this reflective and poetic style that has come to define her throughout her career, during which she has written on everything from art and feminism to gentrification and history. Her books and essays often tackle many of these ideas at once, meandering between them and making surprising connections. Even in an explicitly political work like Hope in the Dark, Solnit is able to find unexpected moments of beauty, without ignoring the dire realities we

Looking back to 2003, when Hope in the Dark was first published, or to 1996, when Democracy Now! first aired, it is easy to dwell on how much hasn't changed. Our political system remains in the hands of powerful elites, climate change is accelerating and the gap between the super-rich and everyone else has grown wider. Yet I came away from both books feeling optimistic about the future of

People want to see an end to war, environmental destruction and political corruption. Increasingly, they are convinced that major changes to the status quo are necessary, and they are building movements to bring about those changes. That's why I'm grateful for the bravery and optimism of people like Amy Goodman and Rebecca Solnit, who aren't afraid to celebrate the progress these movements have made, even when there's still more work to do.

MEET THE PARTY OF UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS LIBERALS

Listen, Liberal: Or, What Ever Happened to the Party of the People? By Thomas Frank Metropolitan Books, 2016

By Steven Sherman

isten, Liberal, by historian Thomas Frank, makes a major contribution by bringing into focus the base for the neoliberal turn of Bill Clinton and Obama, upper-middle-class professionals. The focus on this group is a far cry from Occupy's denunciations of "the 1%" or Bernie Sanders' rhetoric about the "millionaires and billionaires." Frank's sociology is richer than that, but the book has one serious weakness, which muddies its understanding of the

Frank describes the ideology of professionalism, the belief that credentials demonstrate worth. Liberal professionalism also involves a strong sense of trend-following and often celebrates needless complexity. It is an ideology of expertise over democracy. Frank considers professionals to be "the liberal class."

Professionals began to take over the Democratic Party when college-educated liberals succeeded in getting George McGovern nominated in 1972. Dismissive of the concerns of unionized blue-collar workers, who they saw as pro-war, sexist morons, many looked forward to the end of the New Deal. McGovern lost in a landslide, but the unions never returned to the central place they held in the Democratic coalition between the 1930s and the late '60s. Industrial workers were no longer important; what mattered was to give free rein to those who used their minds and demonstrated their value through their degrees.

From McGovern to Dukakis, the Democrats struggled to put together a majority coalition in presidential elections, with each loss followed by cries that the Democrats needed to move further to the right. Finally, Bill Clinton ended the losing streak. Although Clinton had some economic populist elements in his speeches, he soon learned that the bond markets would not tolerate this. Frustration with the situation turned into an embrace of its logic. Clinton was the Democrat who learned to love Wall Street, which, with its needlessly complex products, was naturally appealing to meritocratic professionals. And so Clinton largely contented himself with enacting more of the neoliberal agenda - NAFTA, welfare reform, deregulation of Wall Street and the crime bill, which accelerated mass incarceration. Liberals did not seem to mind much. Frank witnessed one eruption of union-backed rebellion in 1994, in Decatur, Ill., when three factories struck at once. But this rebellion failed without much notice.

Obama won the White House amid a profound financial crisis. Yet his instinct was to defend Wall Street, rather than try to tame it. His administration, staffed with the best and brightest from the elite schools, is excoriated by Frank, particularly for failing to attack the banks using anti-trust powers. By 2012, Wall Street nevertheless drifted back toward the Republicans. But the Dems had found new enthusiasts amongst the capitalist class, the wizards of Silicon Valley who pour the old wine of monopolists into new bottles of high-tech rhetoric

And finally, there is Hillary Clinton. At a Clintonsponsored conference Frank attends, a variety of women are heard from, but only to affirm the need for women in leadership roles and to celebrate the liberating power of social media. As a conclusion, he suggests it is impossible to either reform the Democrats or revive organized labor. All we can do is strip away the Democrats' belief in their own righteousness, after which, apparently, "anything becomes possible."

There is much to admire in this book. Frank is unrelenting in his critique of this meritocracy, which seems oblivious to its manifest failures, such as the way deregulating Wall Street led to financial collapse. But something is missing.

OPPOSITION FROM THE STREETS

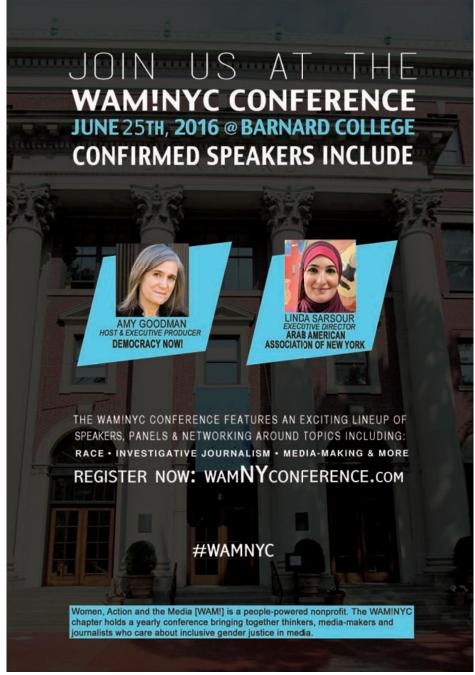
After the Decatur uprising, Frank ignores virtually all opposition to the neoliberal Dems from the left. Unmentioned or barely noted struggles include the 1997 UPS strike; the Battle of Seattle; the Nader campaign; the anti-Iraq War

movement; the Howard Dean candidacy; immigrant rights protests; the Wisconsin uprising; Occupy Wall Street; the Chicago teachers strike' the elections of Elizabeth Warren, Kshama Sawant and Bill de Blasio; Fight for \$15, and Black Lives Matter. These struggles have been coming much faster and fiercer since OWS broke the dam in 2011, culminating in Bernie Sanders' campaign for president (apparently under way as Frank was completing Listen, Liberal), which will claim over 10 million

There is a class divide within the professional class. The professionals who provide the backbone for neoliberalism are upper-middle-class, such as doctors, lawyers and corporate middle managers. They make enough money to be pleased with the current direction of the country. But this group constitutes only a minority of collegeeducated professionals. There is a larger group, including teachers, nurses, and social workers. This group might be described as "aspiring professionals," as it is not unrealistic to believe that one might ascend into the uppermiddle class. Or they might be described as the "college-educated working class," to emphasize that they are often the targets of cuts and speed-ups and are sometimes even unable to make a living wage or find secure employment (for example, adjunct professors).

"Aspiring professionals" captures the dominant consciousness of this group throughout the 1980s and '90s. Few identified with the unions that were being crushed. When Bill Clinton won, aspiring profession-

als were relieved to see one of their own reclaim the White House. But things have changed over the last 15 years. Rising health-care costs, increasing college tuition and lousy job markets have robbed many of these professionals of a sense that they can achieve a middle-class livelihood. This has created the grounds for solidarity with a broader working class. This is the context for Occupy Wall Street and the Sanders campaign, as well as the considerable sympathy for Fight for \$15 and Black Lives Matter. Hillary Clinton has little to offer the "college-educated working class," even if many will pull the lever for her in November to fend off the Republicans. She may breathe a sigh of relief if she is victorious, but she resembles the cartoon coyote who does not notice the ground has disappeared beneath his feet as he runs off a cliff. At that point, he goes into freefall.





By Gena Hymowech

he death of Prince made me pause, in the same way the deaths of Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston and David Bowie did. Shock at their untimely, unexpected passings was part of it, of course, but there was more. I was born in 1976, and Prince, Bowie, Jackson and Houston provided a huge chunk of the soundtrack to my life. It's hard to believe we lost them all in the space of less than six years. Their talent can't be replaced, and their influence was

I'll admit, I'm not Prince's biggest fan, but the songs I like by him are ones I'd want to take with me to a desert island. "Erotic City," "Controversy," "Thieves in the Temple," "Money Don't Matter 2 Night," "A Love Bizarre." All meet my simple criteria for great music — you can play them multiple times and not get bored. "Purple Rain" was Prince taking his heart out of his chest and laying it at our feet. I'm embarrassed it took his death for me to realize that.

But that's the thing about a famous person's death. It forces us to consider (or reconsider) a life — and the life of Prince Rogers Nelson was a fascinating, joyous, controversial and complicated thing.

Musically, Prince covered a lot of ground — disco, pop, rock, jazz, R&B. One of his biggest influences, he told Rolling Stone, was Carlos Santana. The magazine called Prince one of the top

100 best guitarists (#33, specifically), but the general public didn't see him as a guitar guy. Our stupidity.

Prince wrote both sweet, romantic ballads you could play at your wedding and baby-making music with titles that seemed to come directly off adult-movie marquees. He was the brains behind "Nothing Compares 2 U" and "I Feel For You," two songs that couldn't be more diverse, sung by two artists (Sinead O'Connor and Chaka Khan, respectively) at opposite ends of the pop spectrum. He also gave "Manic Monday" to The Bangles and co-wrote "Stand Back" for Stevie Nicks. Other than "I Feel For You," none seem like typical Prince songs. But that was Prince. He surprised.

His songwriting matched the sophis-

tication of his music, exploring themes like the end of the world in "1999," religion in "I Would Die 4 U," AIDS, gangs and drugs in "Sign O' The Times," nuclear holocaust in "Ronnie, Talk to Russia," poverty and war in "Money Don't Matter 2 Night" — while keeping it all catchy.

And while his music spanned all sorts of genres and subjects, his presentation spanned genders. He wasn't afraid to wear ruffles, heels, eyeliner and long hair, and he flocked to girly purple like it was a long-lost cousin. And yet he appeared, for all intents and purposes, straight. Was he secretly bi, a repressed gay man, a repressed trans woman or just a really feminine straight dude? If Prince was out, he would have likely run into some trouble, but as a sexual question mark, he was safe, and what's more, he intrigued.

Prince's sexual lyrics indirectly changed the record industry when, in the mid-'80s, Tipper Gore, future Vice President Al Gore's wife, created the Parents Music Resource Center, in part after hearing "Darling Nikki." ("I knew a girl named Nikki/I guess you could say she was a sex fiend/I met her in a hotel lobby/Masturbating with a magazine.") The PMRC led to the creation of the Parental Advisory label, still in use today. But the artist

who was too hot for Tipper eventually became sexually conservative himself.

PRINCE ROGERS NELSON: A great musician and much more than that

According to Billboard, in 2001, Prince "cut a number of songs from his repertoire that he deemed too explicit, and even stopped swearing. Paisley Park [his home/studio complex], which always had been dry, felt to many more like a junior-high dance than the sex-drenched den of sin from years past." He became a Jehovah's Witness around that time.

His relationship with the gay community was also problematic. He revealed to Chris Rock on a 1997 MTV News show that he didn't sing on Michael Jackson's "Bad" because he took issue with the lyric "Your butt is mine." "Now listen," Prince said in a half-joking, half-tough guy manner, "who gonna sing that to whom? Cause you sure ain't singing it to me. And I sure ain't singing it to you. So right there we got, you know.... Right there we got a problem."

In a 2008 interview with the New Yorker, Prince said gay marriage wasn't "right," and was quoted as saying, "God came to earth and saw people sticking it wherever and doing it with whatever, and he just cleared it all out." (A source who spoke to celebrity gossip columnist Perez Hilton claimed Prince was misquoted; the *New Yorker* disagreed.)

And yet, one can not deny he was a champion of civil rights. "Albums still matter," Prince said at the 2015 Grammy awards. "Like books and black lives, albums still matter. Tonight and always." This time last year, Prince's song "Baltimore," about the deaths of Freddie Gray and Michael Brown, was making news. He also gave money to Trayvon Martin's family and funded Yes We Code, a nonprofit group helping inner-city youth develop skills for careers in tech-related fields.

It's hard to believe all these different Princes existed in the same person — including the more troubling side we didn't know about until recently. "Pop Life" contains lyrics that could sadly wind up being prophetic after the cause of his death is revealed:

"The river of addiction flows/You think it's hot, but there won't be no water/When the fire blows." Prince's fire is out, but man, those flames were surely something to look at while they lasted.



TWENTY YEARS COVERING THE MOVEMENTS CHANGING AMERICA



Tune in every weekday on more than 1,400 public TV and radio stations around the globe and watch online

DEMOCRACYNOW.ORG





John Jay College the City University of New York

20-22

Slavoj Žižek

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor



register at: www.leftforum.org Immortal Technique

Bhaskar Sunkara

Kshama Sawant

August Nimtz

Chris Hedges

Amy Goodman

Laura Flanders

Debbie Bookchin

Medea Benjamin

Tariq Ali

and over

1,000 speakers

